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# LALBAGH FORT

## MONUMENTS AND MUSEUM

By

Syed M. Ashfaque

DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY & MUSEUMS
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION & SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH
GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN, KARACHI.
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## CONTENTS


| | Page |
|---|---|
| Foreword | — |
| Introduction | 1 |
| Part One. The Monuments | 5 |
| The Fort | 6 |
| Other Monuments | 9 |
| Part Two. The Museum | 19 |
| General Features | 19 |
| The Exhibits | 22 |


## ILLUSTRATIONS

Figures


1. Plan of Lalbagh Fort
2. Front elevation of Southern Gate, Lalbagh Fort


Plates


I. Southern Gate, Lalbagh Fort. View from inside

II. (a) Lalbagh Fort Mosque
(b) Bibi Pari's Tomb, Lalbagh Fort

III. Stone inscription in Bibi Pari's Tomb, Lalbagh Fort

IV. Lalbagh Fort Museum. Front view

V. (a) Spear-head, daggers, dagger-sheath and javelin-head
(b) Weapons of war and armours

VI. (a) Celadon dishes and a Persian jar
(b) Swords, a shield and a gauntlet

VII. (a) Three types of gun-locks
(b) Three kinds of guns

VIII. (a) A manuscript copy of the Holy Quran
(b) An illustrated manuscript, 'Bahar-e-Danish'

IX. An enlarged replica of Babar's coin

X. (a) Porcelain wares, late-Mughal period
(b) Porcelain vases from china, post-Ming period

XI. A Mughal carpet. Lalbagh Fort Museum

XII. A portrait of Muhammad Azam Shah

XIII. A miniature painting, 'Madhomawati'

XIV. A specimen of calligraphy

XV. A farman of Emperor Akbar

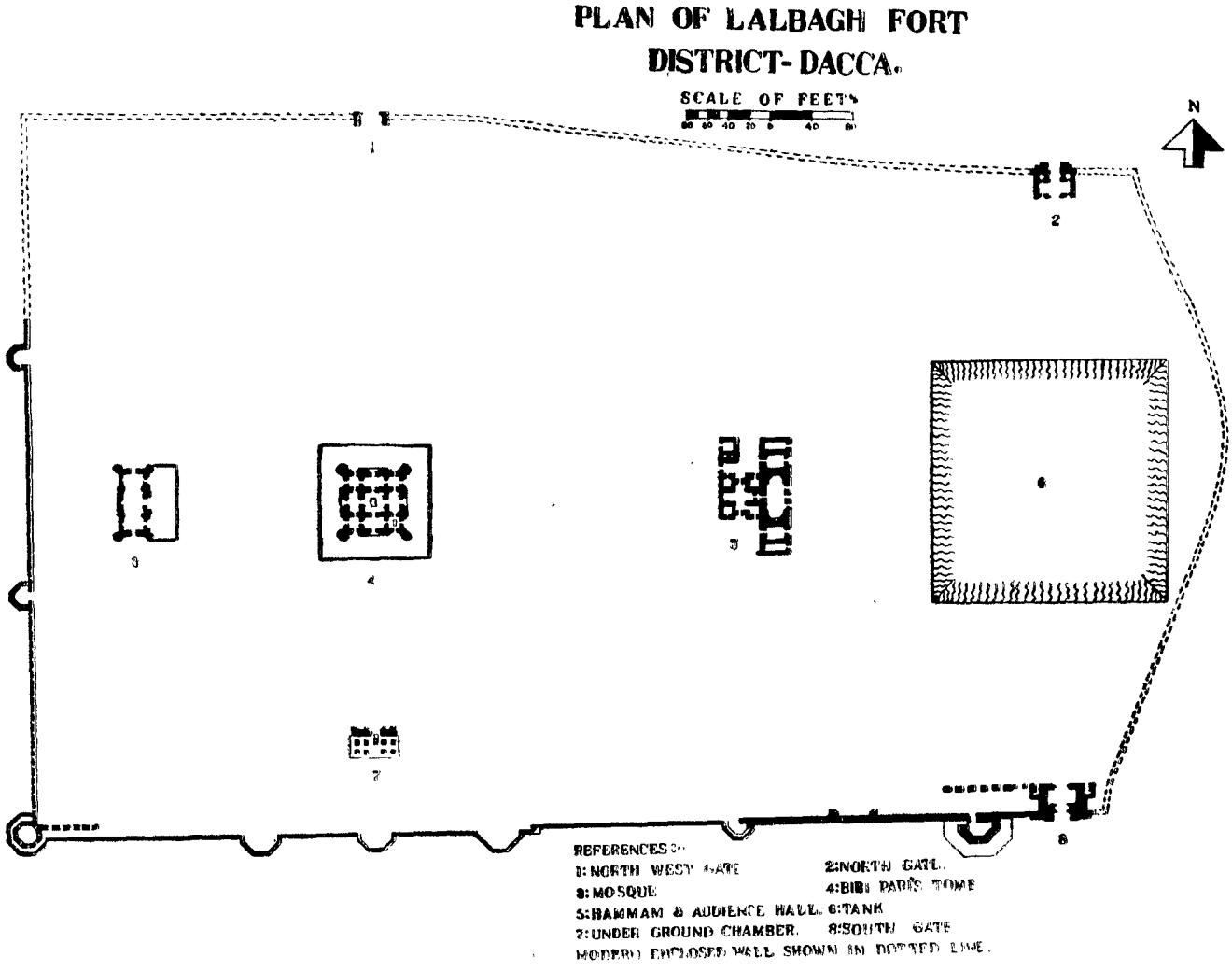
XVI. A royal farman

# FOREWORD

Visitors to the Fort and Museum at Lalbagh, Dacca, will find this guide a useful companion while going round the group of monuments situated there and studying the exhibits displayed in the Museum of Mughal history. Mr. Syed M. Ashfaque, an Officer in the Department of Archaeology, has marshalled the facts with a clarity which retains its force throughout this booklet.

It is my pleasant duty to thank all the Officers and members of the staff of the Department of Archaeology who shouldered various responsibilities in the task of setting up the Lalbagh Fort Museum. I owe a debt of gratitude to Dr. Nazimuddin Ahmed, T.I., Dr. M. A. Ghafur, Messrs. M. A. Qadir, Taswir Hussain Hamidi, R. K. Sarma, Sabur Mia, S. A. Siddiqi, Abdul Ghafur, Shamsul Alam, Qamar-uddin, Syed Muhammad, M. Salim, Abdul Qayum and many others who worked for this purpose with all dedication and sincerity. I have also to thank the Western Pakistan Circle of Archaeology and National Museum of Pakistan, two affiliated Branches of the Department, which contributed material for display in the Museum and deputed their technical staff to assist the Eastern Pakistan Circle in the organisation and display of the exhibits.

F. A. Khan, S. I., T. Pk.,
Director of Archaeology


PLAN OF LALBAGH FORT
DISTRICT- DACCA.
SCALE OF FEET'S
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1
2
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REFERENCES:-
1: NORTH WEST GATE
2: NORTH GATE.
3: MOSQUE
4: BIBI PARI'S TOMB
5: HAMMAM & AUDIENCE HALL.
6: TANK
7: UNDER GROUND CHAMBER.
8: SOUTH GATE
MODERN ENCLOSED WALL SHOWN IN DOTTED LINE.

FIG. 1

# INTRODUCTION

The Mughal Fort at Lalbagh in the city of Dacca is one of the most important monuments in East Pakistan. Situated on the northern bank of the Buri Ganga, the remains of the Fort, weather-worn and ill-used, stand in silent dignity. The remains, now three hundred years old, bear echoes across the gulf of time even if the voices which first spoke are long dead.

This monument is the only existing Palace Fort in East Pakistan. It was built by the last great Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb, under the direct supervision of Shaista Khan, the Viceroy of Bengal (1677-1679). Later, Prince Azam Shah, when he took over as Viceroy of Bengal for a short period, built a double storeyed 'Lofty Hall of Public Audience' in the Fort. Its plan remarkably resembles that of Dalan-i-Sang-i-Surkh in Jahangir's Quadrangle at Lahore Fort.

After the departure of Prince Azam Shah from Bengal in 1680, the construction of the fort came again under the supervision of Shaista Khan. But, four years later, the death of his daughter popularly known as Bibi Pari disheartened him to such an extent that he abandoned the scheme and left the fort incomplete. The surviving remains still narrate the story of grace and grandeur of which that period is quite well-famed.

Unlike any other fort, it cannot be seen well and appreciated from, as it were, outside-in, for the present approach lies through sidestreet off Lalbagh Road. Any attempt to get a good view of the Fort from the river would be equally frustrating, for tenement houses and sheds now fill the space which once lay between the fortification wall and Kazi Riazuddin Street passing below it. The only way to see the Lalbagh Fort, therefore, is inside-out.

A survey of the surroundings from the earthen embankment or a stroll along the parapet of the southern rampart toward sun set will carry the imagination back to mediaeval Bengal. In the deepening haze over the Buri Ganga one may recognize many types of country boats bringing material for construction of the Fort and provisions for the royal camp. It would not be difficult to imagine oneself hearing an Overseer shouting instructions to a gang of workers, or a paymaster calling rolls to distribute wages at the close of the day's work.

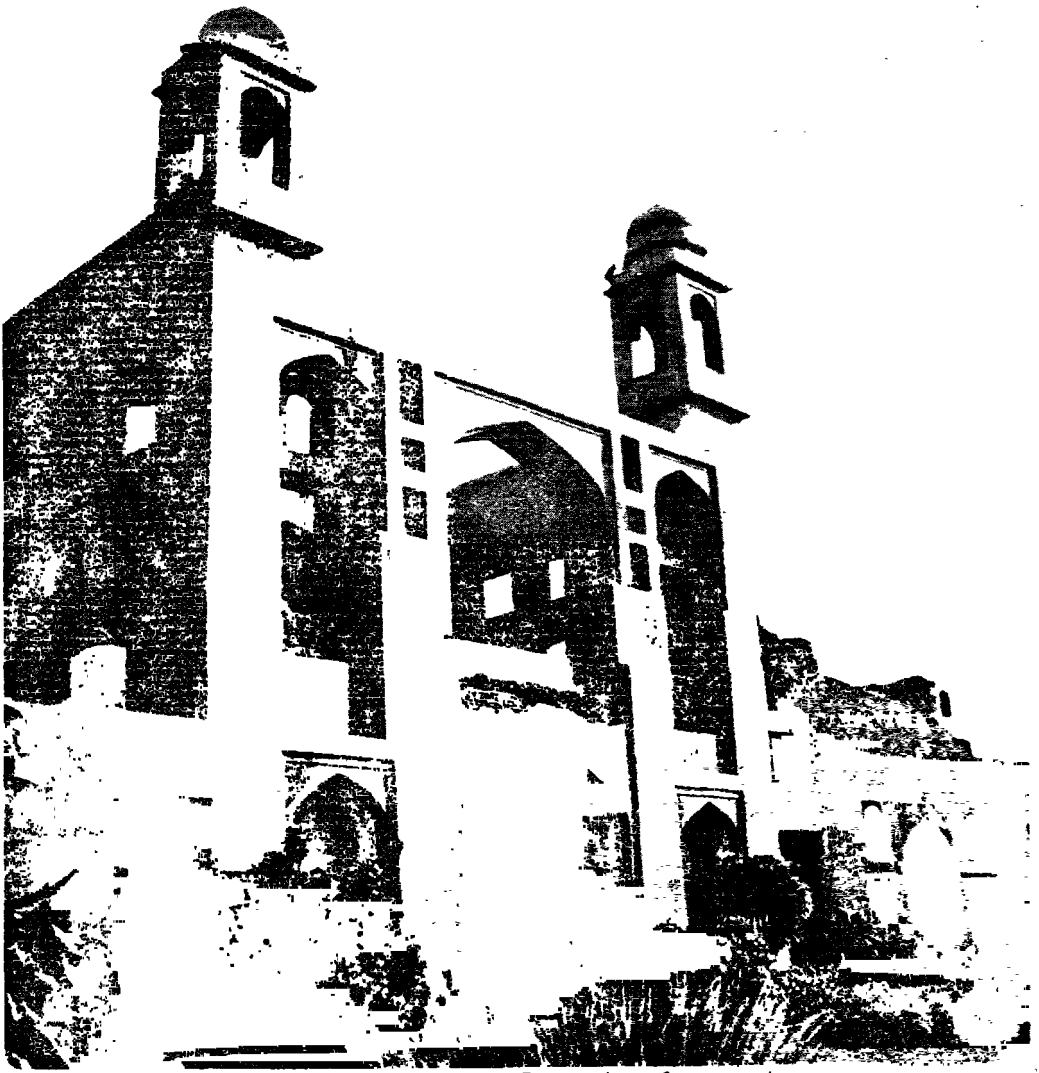
This may all be illusion, but as the last ray of the sun sinks below the silhouette of distant trees a real voice, shrill and warbling, will arouse one from the reverie. This is the muezzin calling for the evening prayer from the old mosque of Lalbagh. One turns back from retrospection to reality, thinking how this voice has broken the tranquility of evenings for the last three hundred years. Evening after evening, it raises phantom figures before the inner eye—row after row of people offering prayer and moving in unison. There appears Prince Azam, leading the prayer. Then comes the gaunt figure of Shaista Khan, looking very sad indeed. His daugh-

ter lies buried in a grave a little distance west of the mosque. Thus the deepening gloom of the evening heightens the significance of the ruins and recreates the pageant of history. An hour spent wandering through the ruins of the Fort can reveal more of the history and cultural legacy of the country than a month's poring over the tomes of history.

The Department of Archaeology has tried conscientiously during the last several years, to arouse public interest in the task of preserving ancient monuments, and at times has also sought help of the local administration in clearing the premises of protected monuments to restore their sanctity and grandeur in the light of the UNESCO resolutions of Tlatelolco, but has met with little cooperation but, rather, much apathy so far.

During the Second Five Year Plan, a large sum was spent on the repair and conservation of the standing structures of the Fort, and in the Third Five Year Plan the Department conceived a scheme for establishing there a Historical Museum of the Mughal period where objects associated with the history of the Fort and related to the Mughal period could be displayed. For this purpose the two storeyed Audience Hall, within the premises of Lalbagh Fort, was selected. Its old plaster carved stone brackets and other features were renovated, and innovations and additions of later periods were methodically removed to bring the building as close to the original plan of the Mughal builders as possible. In all these arrangements, everything was done to preserve the historical significance of the Audience Hall, and to keep its museum function as of secondary importance.

The task of setting up a new Museum involves many problems, financial and technical. The unremitting interest and guidance of Dr. F.A. Khan, S.I., T.Pk., the present Director of Archaeology in Pakistan, plus the response of other senior officers of the Department, along with the imagination and assistance of a number of junior colleagues and technical experts drawn from all the Branches of the Department, have resulted in a trim little museum of definite scope which, with all prolixities removed, takes us straight into Mughal times. The measure of success achieved in setting up the Lalbagh Fort Museum despite all obstructions, is in itself a monument to a good team spirit.



Southern Gate, Lahaugh Fort. View from inside

## PART ONE

# THE MONUMENTS

### HISTORICAL SKETCH

Construction of the Fort at Lalbagh was undertaken by Shahzada Walajah Muhammad Azam Shah Bahadur in 1678. He was the third son of Aurangzeb, born of his first wife, related to the Persian nobility. The prince came to Bengal as Viceroy and stayed there for a short period between 1677 and 1679. He was an ambitious and active person, keenly interested in raising architectural monuments. The somewhat complicated scheme of a fort already initiated by Shaista Khan during the first term of his viceroyalty from 1664 to 1677 at once attracted his attention. With some modification in the original plan, he set himself to the task of building the Fort, which he named after his father as Fort Aurangabad. Construction saw much progress during the short period of his stay in Bengal, but in 1679 he was called hurriedly away to Rajputana to suppress the revolt of Rana Rajsingh of Mewar. Shaista Khan took over the viceroyalty for the second time in 1680, and managed affairs for eight years.

Shaista Khan's daughter, Iran Dukht, popularly known as Bibi Pari, was betrothed to Prince Azam, who it is believed, already had four wives. Bibi Pari died in 1684, five years after the departure of the Prince. Her death greatly upset Shaista Khan, who

abandoned the scheme of the Fort, considering it inauspicious. So, the surviving remains of the Fort stand unfinished from the very start.

A good deal of contemporary information has been gleaned from the diaries of William Hedges, the first Governor of East India Company, and Streyusham master a writer in the Company's service. In one entry, dated 9th July, 1689, it is said that the Fort, besides being the residence of the Nawab was also used as a prison, in which some British convicts were kept in custody.

## THE FORT

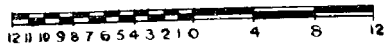
The incomplete Fort was envisaged as a walled palace rather than a siege fort. Spreading over an area of nineteen acres, it appears to have been planned with a rectangular outline, 1082 feet long and 700 feet wide. Some interesting parts of the Fort include the building complex in the south-eastern portion, consisting of a massive gateway, a large bastion and the adjoining pavilion. Other notable parts are the fortification wall in the south and west, a second massive gate standing in the north-eastern parts and a smaller incomplete gateway about 750 feet west of it.

## THE SOUTHERN COMPLEX

The most dominating feature in this part of the Fort is the massive south gate built in three storeys. Its graceful fronton in two lofty stages is bordered by slender octagonal minarets. The upper stage remains incomplete, while the lower stage opens with a prominent half-dome, bearing panel decorations in

# FRONT ELEVATION OF SOUTHERN GATE, LALBAGH FORT DISTRICT DACCA

SCALE OF FEET



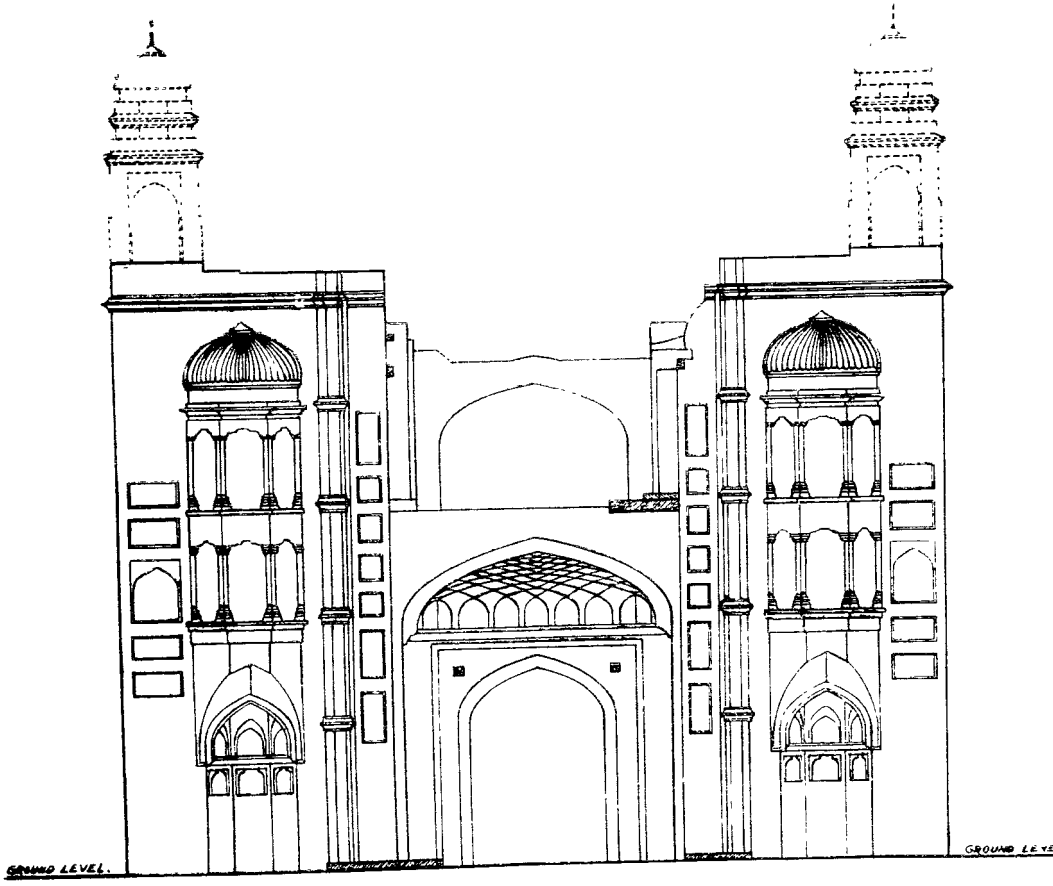




FIG. 2

plaster. The main entrance is a four-centred archway framed in stone-work. The flanking parts on either side of the fronton rise in three stages. The lower stage is a sunken half-domed alcove with panel decorations in plaster, while the two upper stages make three sided oriel windows in vertical couples, with slender pillars supporting moulded brackets. The upper window has slightly projecting eaves and terminates in a half dome. The entrance chamber of the gate has a domed ceiling with a ***ghalibkari*** pattern done in plaster. The inner elevation of the south gate shows repetition of the two lofty stages of the fronton in the middle, while the oriel windows and bordering minarets are absent. The two corners of the gate structure are topped by four-sided small kiosks covered by dome.

A second notable feature in the southern complex is a large, semi-octagonal bastion, previously filled with earth upto the rampart level. It has an external platform 13 feet wide, meant perhaps for mounting guns. Internally at that level, it has a fringe of walls, 3¾ feet thick, with a rectangular opening in each face. Removal of earth from the bastion has revealed a rectangular door in the western base, which perhaps led to an underground tunnel running beneath the thickness of the fortification. The underground passage is filled with rammed earth, indicating a change in the original plan.

Another feature of the southern complex is a roofless pavilion stretching west of the south gate to a distance of 100 feet. It appears to have been planned as a stable for horses, but was left incomplete after building the front wall with six rectangular openings, intervened by thick pillars.

## THE FORTIFICATION WALLS

The fortification wall starting from the south gate runs almost straight to the bastion on the western-corner. This southern fortification has five semioctagonal bastions including the exceptionally large one next to the south gate. Seen from outside, the wall rises thirty feet from the street level, with a running fringe of slightly projecting eaves above which is a series of blind merlons. A little below the rampart level, the wall is pierced at regular intervals by storm drains to discharge rain water.

At the western end of the fortification wall is an octagonal bastion crowned by a colonaded turret with a rectangular opening in each of its facets. The turret was perhaps meant to be covered by a dome, but the work was left incomplete. A little way back of the parapet, running along the southern fortification, is a stretch of a wall with rectangular openings. A similar arrangement also appears above the portion of the southern fortification lying between the two bastions in its eastern part.

Internally, the southern fortification wall was reinforced by piling a board embankment of earth, which slopes toward the fort compound. Near the second bastion of the wall, from the south-western corner, there appears a masonry half-dome in the side of the embankment. This was an entrance to the underground chambers, used sometime as a summer house. It is also said that these chambers were connected by secret tunnels leading to the bank of the Buri Ganga. The underground passage, indicated by the door discovered in the large bastion near the south gate, had a possible connection with the summer house. All

tunnels leading from these chambers were closed sometime during the British occupation.

On the western side, the fortification wall extends to a distance of some 450 feet from the south western corner, and is bolstered by two smaller bastions. A second stage of the wall, with rectangular openings, runs half the course of the fortification, left incomplete on this side.

### NORTHERN GATEWAY

The north eastern gate of the Lalbagh Fort, standing near the present approach off the Lalbagh Road and opposite the police outpost, is a lofty structure, built more or less on a plan similar to the south gate. The construction work was suspended before this gateway could be elaborated and the eastern fortification raised. About 750 feet west of this structure, is a smaller gateway where construction was abandoned even before its arch could be made. It stands derelict with its two massive walls standing upright.

### OTHER MONUMENTS

Inside the Fort enclosure, are a number of other monuments of historic importance. These are the Lalbagh Mosque, Bibi Pari's tomb, a masonry tank and the Audience Hall. These monuments are briefly described as follows:

### LALBAGH FORT MOSQUE

Tradition holds that the mosque was constructed by Prince Muhammad Azam, but the date given in an inscription inside the mosque makes it doubtful. It is built on a low platform and is oblong in plan,

measuring 65 feet by 23½ feet, with octagonal minarets on four corners crowned by solid kiosks. The facade is marked by three half-domes, carrying multi-cusped arches and net pattern designs, below which are the entrances with pointed arches. The central arch is larger than the two on the sides, and is set in a slightly projecting fronton bordered by slender columns. The outer surface of the walls is relieved by sunken panels and the upper fringe carries blind merlons. The roof is covered with three domes, the central being larger than the two on the sides. The domes spring from octagonal drums and their bases are ornamented with merlons. The side domes are slightly bulbous and fluted.

Inside the mosque, above the mihrab of the central doorway, is an inscription incised in plaster surface, the middle portion of which reads:

الله محمد ابوبکر عمر عثمان علی

۱۰۵۹ھ

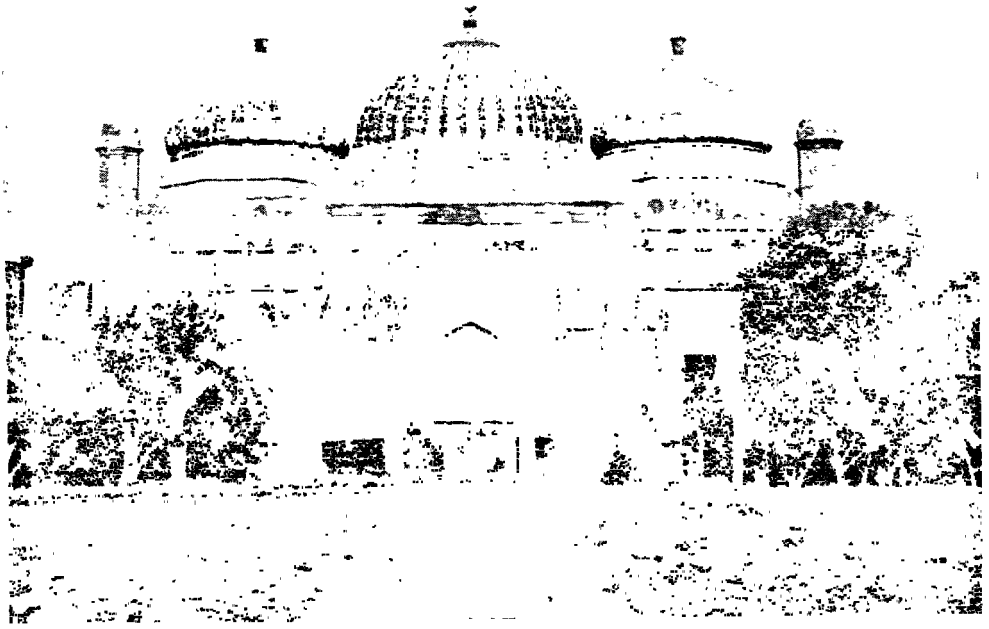
محمدی عربی کاروی مرد سر است
کسی که خاک درش نیست خاک برسراو

which may be translated :

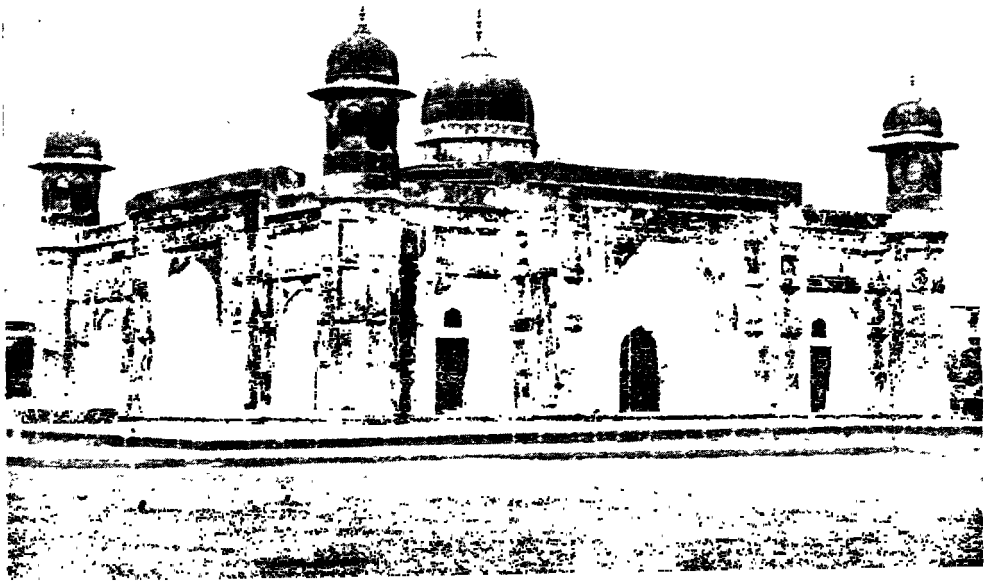
Allah-Muhammad-Abu Bakr-Umar-Usman-Ali
1059 A.H.

Muhammad of Arabia is held in great esteem in both worlds. One who be not the dust of his doorstep, dust be upon his head !

There is another incised inscription visible on the eastern wall which reads :



*a. Lalbagh Fort Mosque*



*b. Bibi Pari's Tomb, Lalbagh Fort. View from south-west*

الله محمد ابوبکر عمر عثمان علی
غفرله راقمه عبدالکبیر

برزمینی که نشان کف پائی تو بود
سالها سجده صاحب نظران خواهد بود

which may be translated :

Allah - Muhammad-Abu Bakr-Umar - Usman-Ali

May Allah forgive its writer, Abd al-Kabir.

An earth on which be thy footprint, shall be a place of prostration to the onlookers for years to come.

It is noteworthy that a similar inscription is also present on the western side above the main doorway of Wazir Khan's Mosque at Lahore, constructed in 1636 A.D.

BIBI PARI'S TOMB

Bibi Pari, alias Iran Dukht, born of some obscure concubine, seems to have been a daughter very dear to Shaista Khan. She died in 1684, during the second term of her father's viceroyalty. Her tomb stands in the middle of a square platform, and is externally 60 feet square, with octagonal corner minarets crowned by solid kiosks. On all four sides, are three entrance in each of which the central entrance is larger. The main entrance is a four centred arch under a half-dome and set within a slightly projecting segment bordered by slender fluted pillars. The side doors are rectangular openings under half domes, each with an additional arched window opening over the door sill. The outer surface of the tomb is decorated with sunken panels, and the parapet carries fringe of

blind merlons. The roof is crowned by an octagonal copper dome, slightly bulbous and measuring 10 feet in diameter. The dome is too small to be in proportion with the structure. In olden days, it used to wear a shining gilt coating.

The walls supporting the roof are 14 feet 4 inches high, and the roof rises by thirteen overlaps to 19 feet 11 inches in the middle. The roof is built throughout in the old Hindu style of overlapping layers of stones and forms a simple straight lined octagonal pyramid, a feature quite remarkable in the Muslim architecture in Bengal.

The interior is divided into nine chambers—four chambers on the corners 10 feet 8 inches square; four central side rooms of oblong shape 24 feet 10 inches long and 10 feet 8 inches wide; and a central room 19 feet 3 inches square. The walls of the central room are of white marble with panelling in black lines, and the floor is laid out in a small pattern of the same material. The central rooms on the sides also have marble facing. The corner rooms were once lined with colourful glazed tiles, all of which have disappeared now.

The remains of Bibi Pari lie in the grave built in the central chamber. The sarcophagus is made of white marble and rises in three terraces, each 9½ inches high. The risers of the terrace are decorated with flower and cartouche patterns cut in low relief. The chamber has four doorways, three of which are closed with marble screens, and the fourth, on the south, is fitted with sandal wood door leaves, bearing cross designs. In the south western chamber, is another grave of smaller size in which the remains

of Shamshad Banu, another daughter of Shaista Khan lie buried. On the platform, outside the building in the south, is the grave of Khudabanda Khan alias Mirza Bengali, son of Huqbanda Khan, a trusted Lieutenant of Nawab Shaista Khan.

The tomb of Bibi Pari seems to have been modelled upon the mausoleum of Humayun at Delhi. The stone and marble were brought from Jaypur, Chunar and Gaya, and the building must have cost a huge sum of money, but the builders have failed to give it the touch of dignity and grandeur observed in other Mughal tombs.

A slab of black basalt, bearing an inscription, was discovered lying loose inside the tomb of Bibi Pari. From the circumstances of its discovery it was presumed for long to be her tomb stone. A careful scrutiny of the text of the inscription now shows that it bears nothing of the elegiac effect usual in tomb stones. It is rather an eulogic tribute paid to an Emperor who did wondrous good to his country.

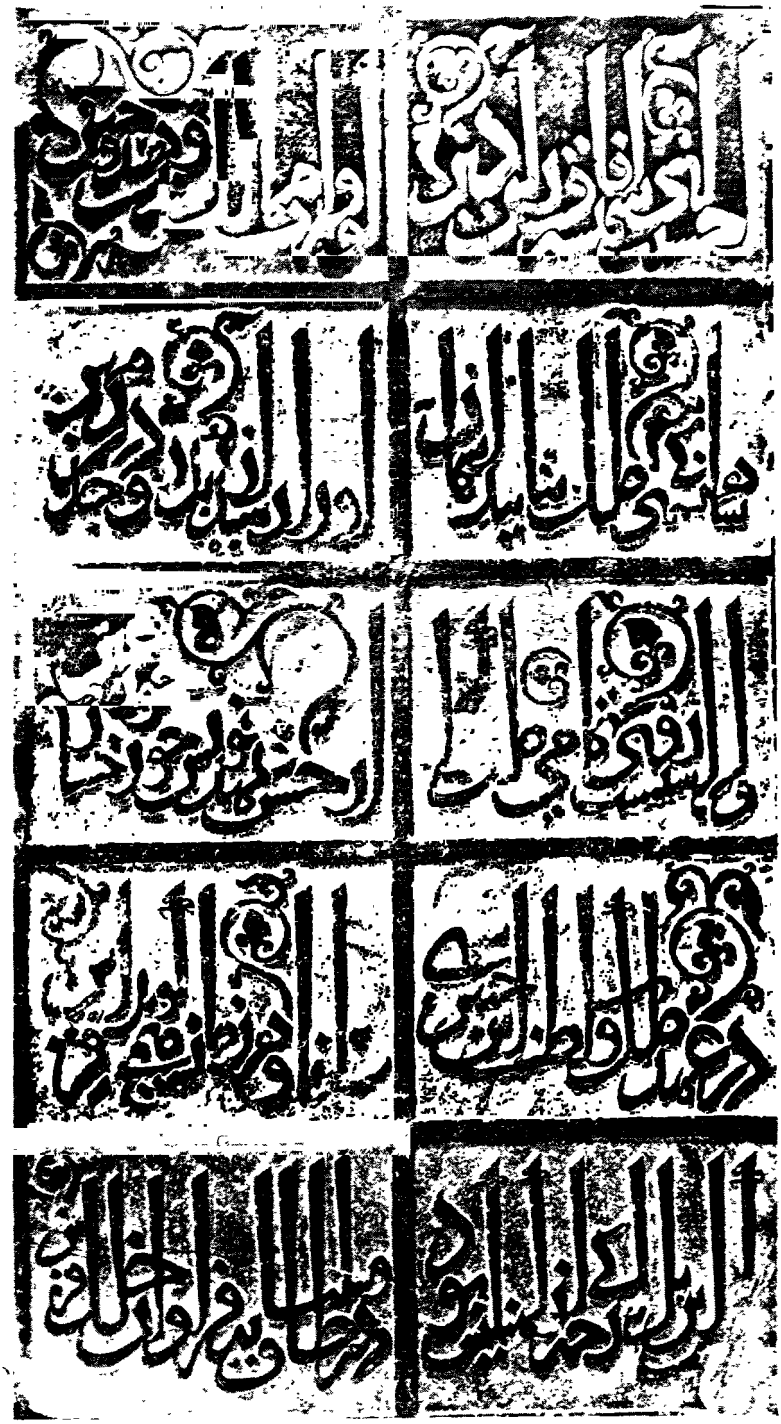
The slab is marked with ten rectangular segments in rows of two vertical columns by smooth lines in relief. The text consists five verses of a *Qasida* in Persian, each hemistich inscribed in a segment in flourishing *tughra* style, with some foliage and flowers introduced to fill empty spaces. This stone inscription bears a most pleasing appearance, and on account of its text, is a very valuable document relating to the history of Dacca, and particularly to the Fort. It has been put on display in the Lalbagh Fort Museum. The text of the inscription reads as follows:

احسنت ای شهنشه آفاق رکن دین
کو وارث ممالک سندست و هند چین
شاهنشهی که ملک بتائید آسمان
اورا رسید از پدر و جد در زمین
وآراستست روئی تمامی ملک را
از حسن عهد خویش چو رخسار حورعین
درعهد ملک و سلطنت این چنین شهے
دانا و هر زمان همے گوید آفرین
کست این بلاد که از کهنگیں بود
در طاق فیلپایه فراوان خلد قرین

The Qasida refers to an Emperor who has claims over a vast empire created by his predecessors which spread over Sind, India and the Chinese territory of Central Asia. A versified rendering of the text is suggested as follows :

Hail, Sovereign of the World, Pillar of Faith,
Heir to the crown of Sind, Ind and Scyth;
O, mighty King who by Heaven's will hath owned,
The earthly domain thy forefathers governed;
Whole expanse of kingdom thou hast adorned,
By virtuous sway, like Houri checks radiant.
Even in his age, this Emperor benign,
Was praised of sages and wits of the time.
This aging city once neglected lay,
Like paradise, he furnished with arched alley!

This ornate tribute, or *Qasida*, employs an artifice practised in old Turkish and Persian poetry, in which the name of the person so eulogised was concealed by synonyms representing each fragment of the full name. Following this cue, it is not difficult to pick



*Stone inscription in Bibi Pari's tomb, Lalbagh Fort*

up the synonym for each unit in the fragmented name of Aurangzeb Alamgir, dispersed through the Persian verses.

The last verse, mentioning an 'aging' city, is probably an allusion to the city of Dacca where Aurangzeb endorsed the scheme of building a fort, sarais and other monuments. The long drawn battle with the Marhattas, however, did not allow him any leisure to pay attention to these projects.

The commemorative stone inscription, perhaps an inaugural plaque of the Fort Aurangabad, was intended to be affixed on some auspicious occasion over one of the arched gateways supported on 'elephantine' pillars. That moment never arrived, and the slab was ultimately stowed away in Bibi Pari's tomb.

### THE TANK AND THE AUDIENCE HALL

On the eastern side of the Fort, lying midway between the North and South Gateways, is a fine masonry tank, measuring 235 feet square. It was built as a reservoir of water, and the earth removed from it was probably used in making the embankment along the southern defences. The masonry terraces along its bank have now totally disappeared. A small pavilion supported on four pillars and an attached bathing ghat were made sometime in the late nineteenth century. It is reported that many of the Indian Sepoys, killed in the Mutiny of 1857, were thrown into the tank, and the area around it was for a long time, supposed to be haunted.

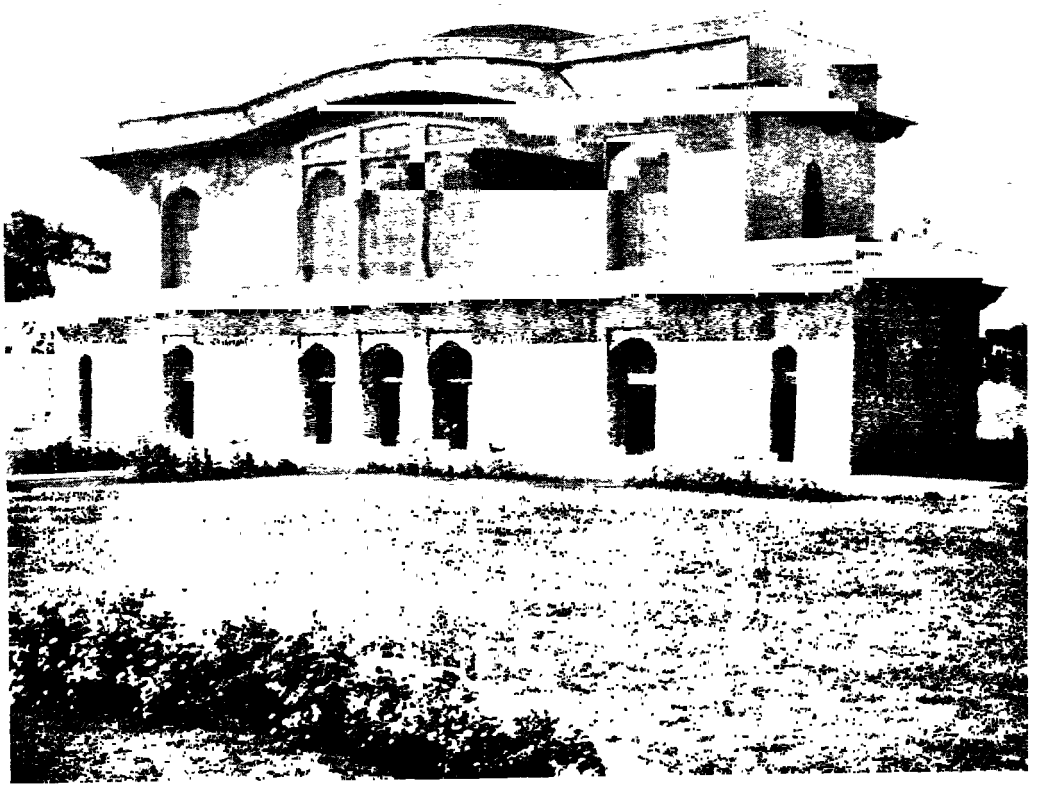
About 130 feet west of the tank, stands the oblong building of the Audience Hall. The building

is a double storeyed structure with a symmetrical facade on the eastern side. The ground floor is 107 feet long, built on a plinth one foot high. The first floor rises above it, with a lateral reduction of length by 10 feet on both sides. It is covered by a vaulted roof with a curved gable extending longitudinally. The ground floor has a fringe of *chajja* at the storey level supported on stone brackets carved in dewlap shapes. The *chajja* of the upper floor follows the arcuate contour of the curved roof in the middle portion on both sides of the building. A parapet rises above the *chajja* with the same arcuate bulge upwards on the two sides.

The eastern facade is pierced by seven entrances three in the middle opening, into the central Hall on the ground floor; one on either side, opening into the rooms flanking the central Hall; and one on either side leading to the vestibule of stairs which go to the upper floor. All these entrances have pointed arches set in slightly sunken panels.

The eastern elevation of the upper floor looks more pleasing with three multi-cusped arches in the middle, separated by polygonal columns of sandstone. Similar arches are also present on the western side. These open arches on both sides of the central hall were meant to allow free circulation of air. There are also arched openings provided on both sides of the square rooms flanking the central hall. All these arches and openings have been covered up now by concrete *jalis* imitating Mughal *jali* patterns to minimise atmospheric effects on the fixtures and exhibits of the Museum established in the Audience Hall.

On the west side of the building is low masonry



*Audience Hall, now the Museum, at Lalbagh Fort. Front view.*

structure housing the Hammam Khana or baths, toilets and other chambers, built in a compact unit attached to the ground floor. The open roof of this structure is reached from the upper central hall by a small flight of stairs. The roof has a parapet toward the three open sides.

The central hall on the ground floor is an oblong room 26 feet 7 inches in length and 18 feet 3 inches in breadth. The passages to the adjoining parts are rectangular openings below squat half domes of pointed arch made in the thickness of the partition walls. In the centre of the room is a large trough in which fountains must have played in the early days. Opposite the central entrance is a door under a half dome leading to the Hammam Khana. The two doors on the sides are balanced on the opposite side by half-domed alcoves. The diagonal sides of the large squat arches are marked by large sunken panels.

The flanking rooms on either side of the central hall have sunken alcoves opposite the doors opening on the east. Above the rectangular passages, connecting with the central hall, are large niches with pointed arches.

The first floor is reached through the stairs in vestibules on the southern side of the Audience Hall. The passage leads through the open roof of the small room and a door opening on the southern side of the first floor. The arrangement of the rooms here is the same as on the ground floor, except that the ceilings of the central hall rise in a high vault looking like the bottom of an inverted boat. The sets of three multi-cusped arches on the eastern and western sides

are supported on pillars carved in stone, with square bases faced with cartouche relief and capitals expanding through a series of tiers.

An entry in the diary of William Hedges refers to the 'Lofty Hall of Public Audience' in the Lalbagh Fort constructed under the supervision of Prince Muhammad Azam. Its upper storey was used as a Darbar Hall. Subsequent events turned this famous Hall into the residence of police officials during the British rule, and a lot of mushroom additions and spoiliation of the original features took place. The Department of Archaeology has now restored the building almost to its original form by removing ugly structures raised on the small roofs of the first stage and around the Hammam Khana.

## Part Two

# THE MUSEUM

## I. General Features

### SCOPE

Lalbagh Fort Museum is an institution of limited scope which aims to supplement knowledge of the Mughal times by displaying some material remains other than the monuments standing in its vicinity. In this respect, it shares the same scope as the Mughal Gallery in the Old Fort at Lahore and the Museum at Umerkot, two other institutions started earlier by the Department of Archaeology, all are devoted solely to important phases of the national history.

The importance of the Mughal period lies in the fact that it catalysed the process of cultural integration, and during this period a separate identity emerged which can now be called a *Pakistani Culture*. In the words of Dr. Spear 'The Mughal Court, so long as it lasted, was the school of manners for Hindustan. From the time of Akbar it had much the same influence upon Indian manners as the Court of Versailles upon European....From Bengal to the Punjab...Mughal etiquette was accepted as the standard of conduct ...such an influence was invaluable cement to society...'

Some prejudiced historians in the past have depicted the Mughal rulers in such lurid hues that their names have come to bear a connotation of sensuality provoking dislike among those ignorant of

history. This was done in an attempt to generate a wave of hatred against the Muslim and to divorce future generations from their own past in order to graft alien ideologies. It is here that a museum of history can play its important role in correcting falsehood and in keeping the interest of the people, in their cultural legacy, alive.

CONTENTS

This small museum set up with modest beginning, contains a representative collection of various antiquities, replicas and objects of art, which give some idea of the cultural and artistic manifestations of the people during the Mughal period.

The repertory of the Museum comprises arms and armour, manuscripts, coins, ceramics, carpets, miniature paintings, specimens of calligraphy, royal farmans, etc.

Some of the exhibits bear only an indirect relation to the period in being contemporaneous with articles of cognate association and of indigenous nature. The collection embraces the widest range of Mughal history, from coins of Babur who founded the dynasty in 1526 A.D., to the instruments of war used in the skirmishes with the Sikhs who took possession of the Punjab towards the end of the Mughal Empire. A portrait of Prince Azam Shah and the inscribed slab of stone recovered from Bibi Pari's tomb are two significant relics with direct bearing on the history of Lalbagh itself.

A long tradition of neglect of cultural property,

vandalism and the drain of antiquities to foreign countries in pre-Independence days, have robbed the land of some of its most prized relics and mementos. The material put on display here has been assiduously acquired by the Department of Archaeology from various sources over the last twenty years. The present exhibits do not fall under a rigid scheme of final selection, and the Museum is ever ready to substitute the pieces for better specimens as they come forth in the course of time.

## PLAN OF EXHIBITION

A collection, limited in quantity and divided into such variety, does not lend itself to an arrangement in strict chronological sequence. The controlling theme in the plan of exhibition, therefore, is the grouping of like objects, with due consideration given to their susceptibilities and aesthetic value in assigning their positions.

In the three rooms on the ground floor have been displayed the instruments of war, with various kinds of weapons arranged in small group.

In the first room on the upper storey are displayed the copies of the holy Quran and other manuscripts in the showcases on the right hand side of the entrance, with the inscribed stone slab resting in an alcove. On the left side of the entrance are the display panels of the Mughal coins, with a large map of the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent showing Mughal mint towns during the reign of Aurangzeb. A few enlarged replicas of gold coins have been fixed to the walls above the showcases.

In the central Hall is displayed ceramic ware, with smaller pieces kept in showcases and large vases and jars mounted on sparate pedestals below the arches. Also arranged in this Hall are miniature paintings, appropriately mounted in glass covered exhibition cases, and three specimens of Mughal carpets hung beneath the arches. Resting in the centre of the Hall is a small replica of the Badshahi Mosque Lahore made to scale, and mounted on a raised wooden platform.

In the last room on the northern end of the upper storey have been displayed some specimens of calligraphy on the right side and a few selected pieces of royal farmans, or decrees, on the left. The exit lies through the door on the northern side and down the stairs leading to the ground floor.

## II. The Exhibits

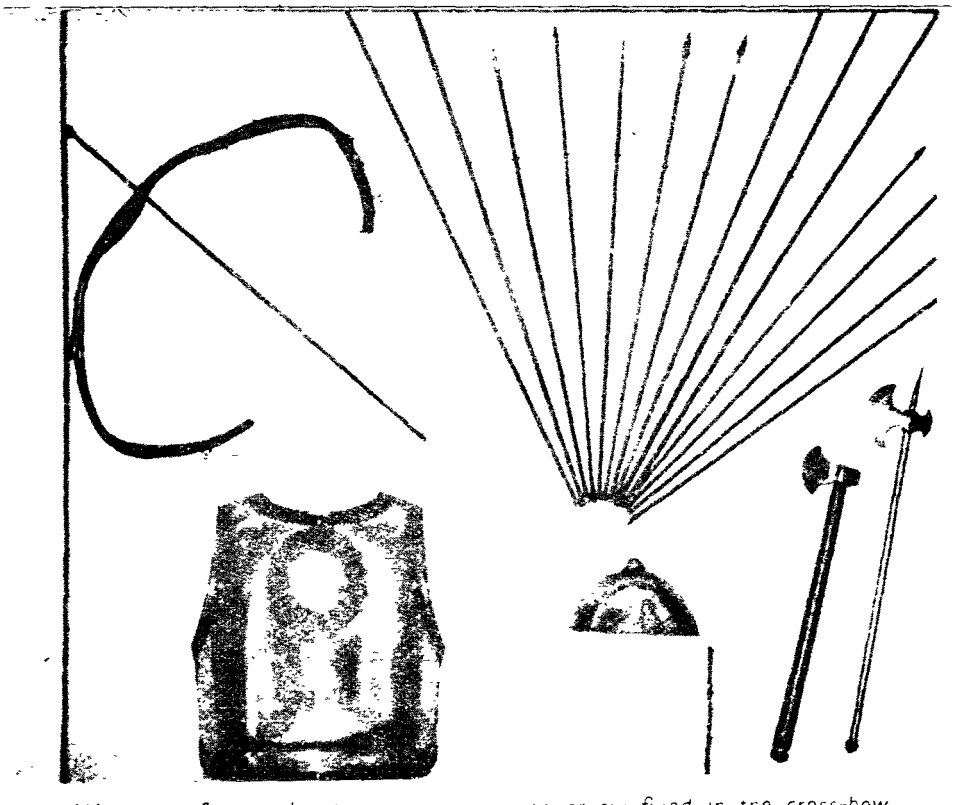
The various categories of objects put on display in the Lalbagh Fort Museum are defined below in synoptic outline, some details of a few particular pieces are added where necessary.

### ARMS AND ARMOUR

The collection of the weapons of war shown in the three rooms on the ground floor is a contribution from the Armoury Museum at Lahore Fort. These weapons and firearms once formed a part of the arsenal of the Sikh Army during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The weapons fairly represent a range of offensive and defensive instruments in vogue at the close

Spear-head, daggers, dagger-sheath and javelin-head



Weapons of war: battle axes, arrows, an arrow fixed in the cross-bow
Armours a breast plate of a cuirass, a brass helmet

of Mughal history. The offensive weapons may be put into two broad divisions, i. e., weapons of the ancient and the modern order. The ancient order of the weapons start with bows and arrows and includes javelins, spears, axes, swords, daggers etc. All these weapons wielded by hand or hurled by muscular power come under the generic term of *armes blanches.* The modern order of the instruments of offence includes all kinds of firearms in which the source of energy lies in the explosive, which is ignited by number of devices, such as match-locks, flint-locks, percussion-locks, wheel-locks,etc.

## Ancient Order Of Weapons

### BOWS AND ARROWS

In the ancient order of weapons, the bows and arrows are the most primitive instruments through the ages. In Mughal times, arrow-heads were devised in a number of ways to serve different purposes. The pointed arrows with square cross-section were usually aimed at the eyes of animals in cavalry charge. The small, spear pointed arrow-heads were useful in shooting at enemies hidden in bushes and foliage. The flat head arrows with wide cutting edges were efficient in inflicting serious injuries on the back and nape of the fleeing enemy. In addition, there were arrows with hollow shafts filled with explosive chemicals. A piece of nail, corked lightly to a socket in the arrow head, served as a detonator when the arrow hit any resistant object. The use of this missile was to set the enemy installations on fire. A well graded collection of these. different type of arrows has been dis-

played in the central Hall of the Museum.

The arrows were discharged by the cross-bow bent by muscular exertion or with the help of a winder such as a windlass. The bow-string was made of dried intestines of animals. The bent cross-bow was held in position by the arrow shaft held in a catch, at the mid-point of the bow.

### SPEARS

Spears or *nezas* were a cavalry weapon of versatile use. A spear-head is a flat tapering blade of iron with double edges, and a socket behind, by which it is fixed into the end of a long staff. It was useful in keeping the enemy at a safe distance in a cavalry charge, and in keeping balance in the motions of the horse. It was useful in other situations also. Some spear heads have been put on display in the northern room on the ground floor.

### JAVELINS

Javelins or darts, look like the spears, the difference being only in the shape of the head. A javelin head is made like a spike and is attached to the tip of a staff. The weapon served as a pole for the banner or infantry insignia. It was often used in sports and exercises and was thrown by a rider from horseback at a stationary target. A few javelin-heads are put on display along with the spear heads.

### AXES

Battle axes were meant usually as a sign of martial authority, and carried by retinues on either side

of the battalion command, at the head of an infantry column marching in form. The axe-heads are fan-shaped blades fixed to a short handle at a transverse angle. Some axes had a sharp spike projecting from the tip of the handle or at the back of the axe blade.

DAGGERS :

The daggers displayed in the Museum are simple hafted weapons. The blades of all these daggers are flat tapering elements made of forged steel with a sharp edge on one side. Other types of daggers in vogue during the Mughal period were the kukris with curved blades, and *kirpans* with double edges, used by the Sikhs.

The handles of the daggers on display are usually of wood, but in a few cases ivory, horn and brass handles are also present. A beautiful specimen carries an ivory handle and a quillon block of brass etched with sun-flower and ring patterns. A few dagger sheaths have also been put on display.

SWORDS

The swords displayed in the Museum form a motley collection of various types such as the Saracenic curved blades used by the Persians and Mughals; broad blades with slight curvature used by the Afghan; and straight ***guptis*** used by Sikhs and Hindus. The sizes of the blades are different. The swords have sharp edge on one side. Some of the specimens have a double edge to a short length in the fore parts which make the weapons more efficient in thrusting.

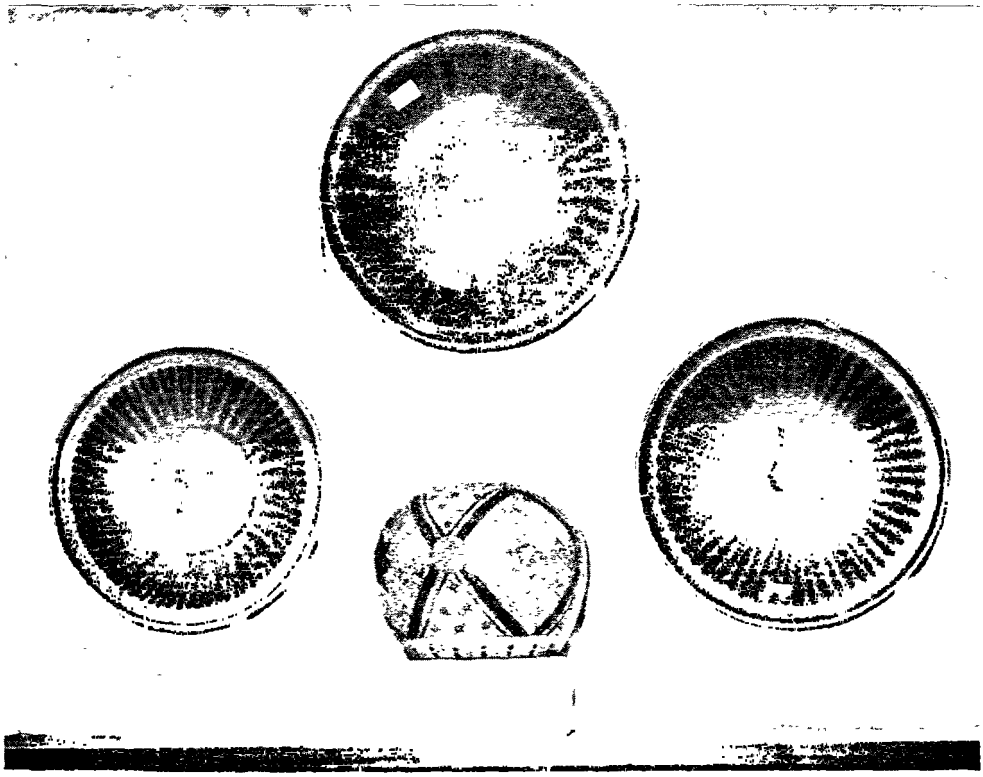
The haft of the sword holds the blade by a

metallic quillon formed by a straight or recurved bar, set at the base of the grip in the plane of the blade. A large pommel or terminal near the grip protected the hand from sliding on to the edge. The metallic cage on the handle was a European innovation to protect the knuckles against injury.

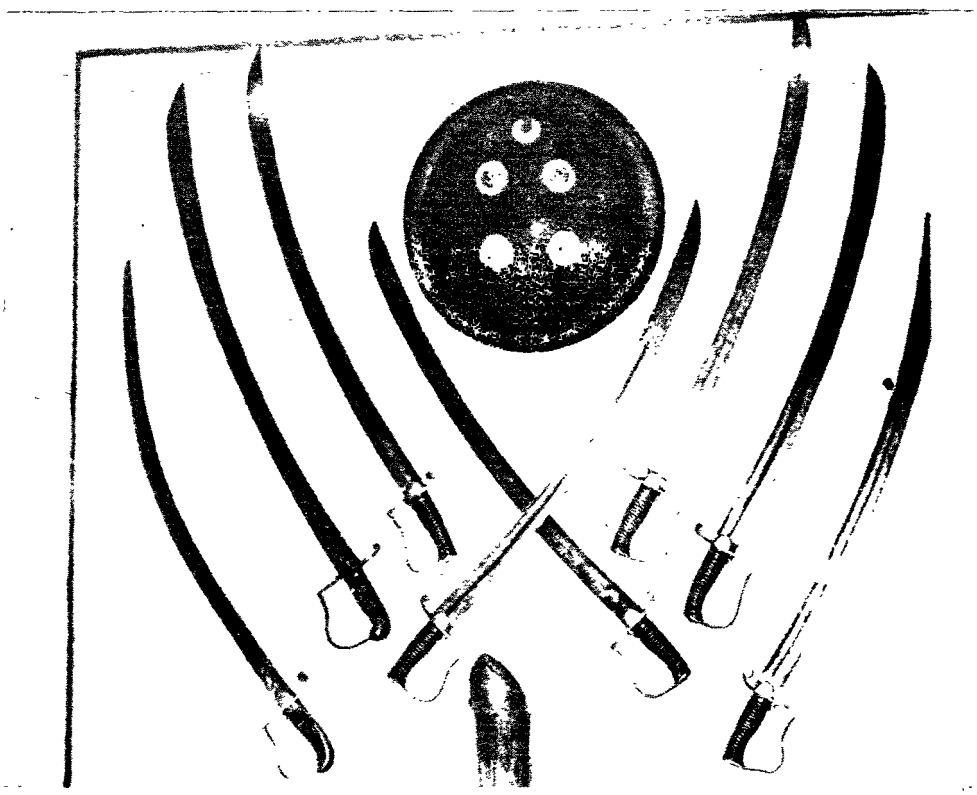
*Armes blanches* such as swords, daggers and spears were sometimes decorated with designs in gold or silver by a technique known as damascening. Flower patterns or verses of the holy Quran were inscribed by a process of embossing in which the metal surface was beaten by a small hammer to effect the relief. The name of the soldier and his batallion insignia was struck by engraving. Sikh and Hindu weapons usually carried the figure of a charging lion or of war deities engraved on the blade near the handle. The fine after-treatment, known as chased work, was done with special tools. Etching was another process of making designs on the metal surface by applying corrosive chemicals.

CALTROPS

The caltrops, or ***gokhru*** were deadly weapons employed as land mines to disable the enemy cavalry. A single specimen, seen in the Museum, is an iron ball with four sharp spikes projecting from it to make the apex of an imaginary tetrahedron. In whatever position it is laid on ground, there is always a spike pointing upward. An unsuspecting enemy coming through the mined path was severely injured if he happened to step on one of these murderous weapons. All anticipated approaches of the enemy were strewn



Celadon dishes and a Persian jar



Swords, a shield and a gauntlet

with caltrops hidden beneath dead leaves and straw.

In addition to these weapons of offense, there were defensive appliances as described below :

SHIELDS

Shields are an instrument of defence usually in the shape of a large convex disc made of hard wood and covered with thick hide. The shields displayed in the Museum are mostly of pavise type carried by the infantry. A large shield, termed a targe, or *adarga* in Moorish, was used in a joust by two challenging combatants before the opposing columns of infantry engaged in fight. One of these shields in the Museum collection is fitted with four large iron studs in the middle.

CUIRASSES :

These were protective armour consisting of the back and breast plates linked by short lengths of chains passing over shoulders and on the sides. The collection contains two breast plates, one is a simple iron shell worn by a model soldier of the Mughal period, standing in an alcove in the central Hall on the ground floor, and the other, with brass lamination on iron plate, is in a showcase. Both these breast plates bear signature of the same European armourer, reading 'Rde Klingenthal'. The year of manufacture in the first is given as 1831, while in the second it is 1832. The second breast plate, which is only the front part of a cuirass, also bears a figure of a fighting cock moulded on a brass stud fixed to the upper part of the sternem. This armour, once in possession

of the Sikh Army, indicates that they used to import sophisticated implements of war from Europe at that time.

### HELMETS

The Museum has a few brass helmets of both simple and bascinet type. The latter carries a spike fixed on the top. Copper headgear, with pleated folds, was worn beneath the turban so as to make a concealed protection for the head. One of the brass helmets bears the name 'Akal Singh', probably a Sikh soldier.

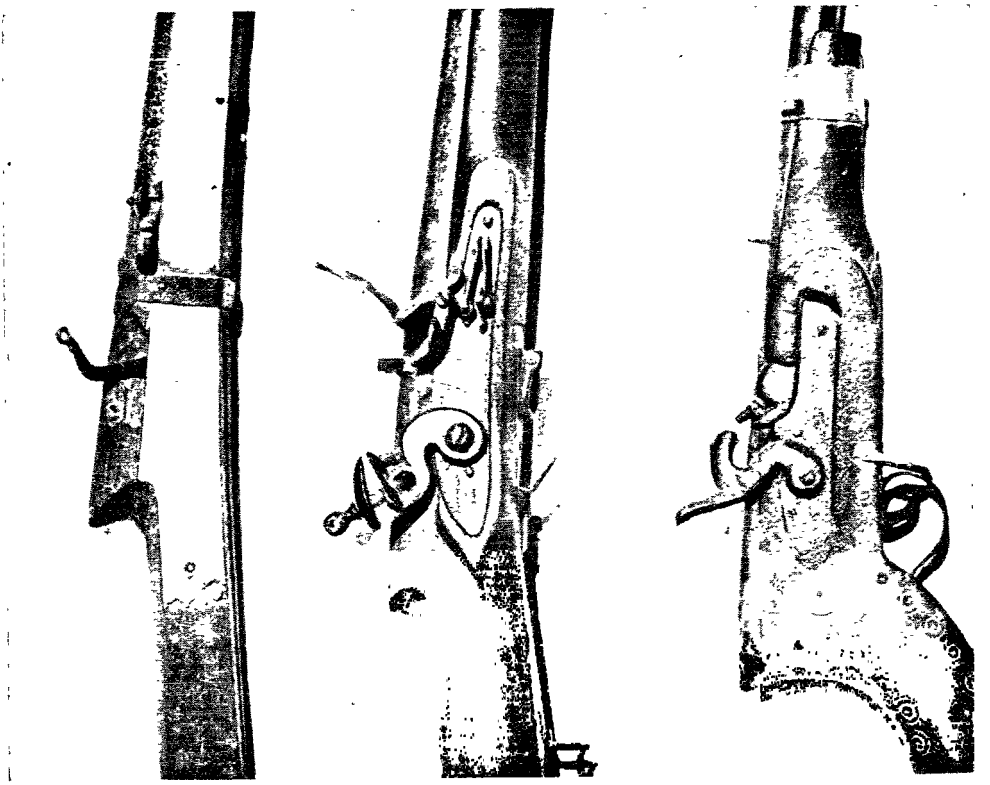
### GAUNTLETS

These were metallic gloves of flexible pieces hinged together to cover the hand. A cylindrical extension went up to cover the forearms. It was a custom in the mediaeval period to throw ones gauntlets before an adversary as a gesture of challenge to fight. A soldier punished for indiscipline was made to run through the rows of other standing soldiers who kicked and punched him as he passed. Memory of the unpleasant penalty still survives in the phrase 'to run the gauntlet'.

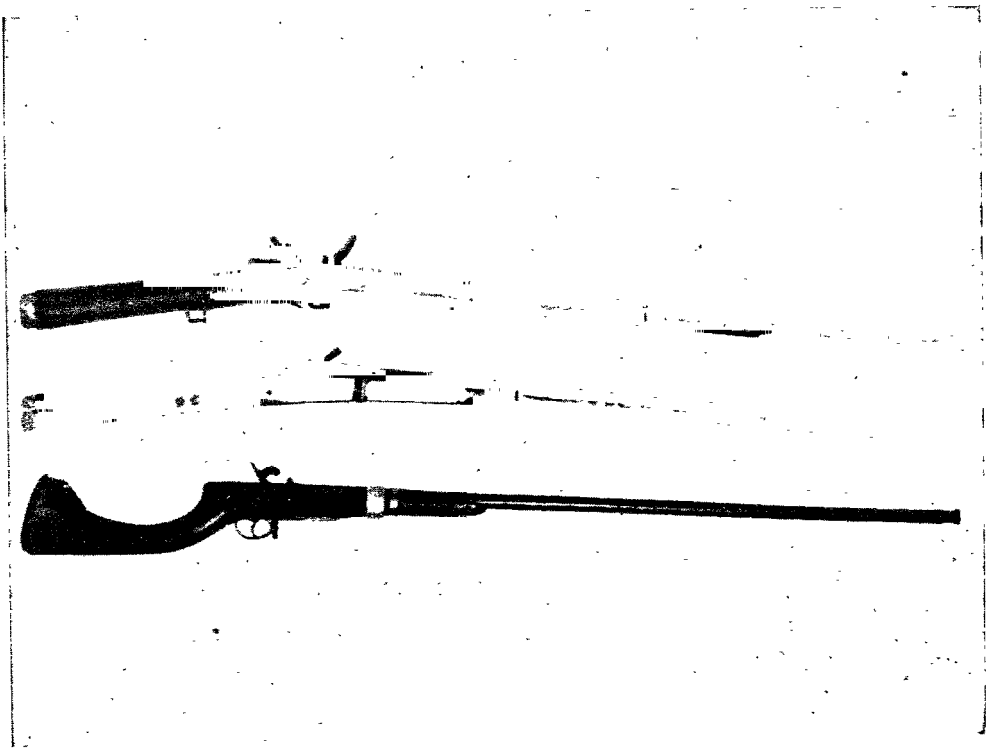
In the Museum there is only one piece of the forearm cover, a metallic shell slightly tapering forward to fit the wrist. It bears a repousse pattern of flowers.

## Modern Order Of Weapons

In this order are included all types of firearms, consisting such portable instruments as muskets,



a. Three different types of gun locks: right, percussion lock; middle, flint lock, left, match lock



b. Three different types of guns late-Mughal period

jazails, small howitzers, pistols and rifles. Apparently these fire-arms differ in sizes, shapes and decorations, but the fundamental difference lies only in the powder ignition devices, such as match-locks, flint-locks, percussion-locks, wheel-locks, etc. Rifles have a further distinction from ordinary guns in possessing longitudinal spiral groves chiselled inside the barrels to import a rotating motion to the projectile and thus to stabilise its trajectory for increased accuracy. The arms displayed in the Museum fall into only two categories, flint-lock and percussion-lock devices. Before observing these fire-arms it would be well to know something about the gun powder used then.

## GUN POWDER

Gun powder is a Chinese invention and was further refined by the Muslims. Gun powder used in the Mughal period was a mixture of finely ground charcoal, sulphur and saltpetre, mixed in varying proportions for different strengths of explosive. A device, consisting of an iron chamber, fixed with piston and levers, was used as a tester of strength. Ignition of the charge in the closed chamber pushed the piston up to register the strength on a graduated scale.

In the obsolete fire-arms displayed in the Museum, the gun powder was tamped tightly inside the barrel with a ramrod. After the powder column, was placed a lead ball of appropriate size. A small quantity of cotton wool was packed to keep the ball in its position. When detonated, the powder exploded with violent force, sending the bullet towards its target.

## FLINT-LOCK ARMS

The flint-lock ignition device, used in the muskets, pistols and rifles on display, consists of a piece of flint held securely in a metallic jaw attached to a lever. The lever connected by a spring to the trigger makes a swift move when the latter is pressed. The flint striking on an anvil raises a shower of sparks which pass through an aperture into the magazine. The powder ignites and sends the bullet forth. The muskets, jazails, rifles and pistols carrying flint-locks may be recognized by the small steel jaws looking like the open bills of birds.

## PERCUSSION-LOCK ARMS

The percussion device consists of a socket shaped hammer which fits on an anvil known as a nipple. The nipple has a small hole in the centre. A small pellet of mercury fulminate, or some other detonator, is put on the nipple before pressing the trigger. The hammer striking the nipple sends a flash of sparks through its hole into the magazine, which discharges the gun.

The more sophisticated device of percussion lock can be observed in the various pistols of European make displayed in the southern room of the ground floor. The barrels of some of these pistols are octagonal. Also of interest are a few Afghan muskets and Badakhshi jazails with very long barrels displayed in the ante-chamber of the Hammam Khana. A Pathan rifle shows a wooden butt recurved upward like the tail of a fish in somersault. Such butts are characteristic of the fire-arms used by the mountain tribes,

as they were not so cumbersome to carry when one had to crawl through stony defiles. A fine specimen of a European musket has a very slender and long butt covered with broad brass strips.

Some of the fire-arms shown in the Museum carry a lock plate and mounts to hold the elements of ignition and the ramrods.

In the southern room there are two specimens the portable howitzer with a short barrel expanding like bell toward mouths. These used heavy shot to batter enemy defences. One of these guns is covered with brass lamination with repoussed decorations.

There are also on display a few lead bullets. An iron mould, in the shape of a plier, with a round cavity in the jaw, was used to make bullets from molten lead.

MANUSCRIPTS

Early Muslim manuscripts were written mainly in two styles of calligraphy, the angular Kufic and the cursive Naskhi. Kufic, the earliest form, accentuates the vertical strokes of the characters. It was used extensively during the first five centuries of Islam in architectural inscriptions, textile patterns, pottery decoration, and in writing the copies of the holy Quran. There were various subdivisions of the Kufic, of which three were most common, i.e. the simple Kufic, foliated Kufic and floriated Kufic.

From the 11th century onward, Naskhi started replacing Kufic. A kind of cursive style was already evolving in the 7th century A.D., which finally deve-



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loped to the graceful Naskhi, mainly in the writings of Ibn Muqla who lived in Baghdad in the 10th century. He also introduced a kindred form of writing known as *thuluth*, which exagerated the length of the vertical strokes and horizontal bases. In Iran, another form of writing was developed by Mir Ali Tabrizi who lived in the 14th century. This was the 'dancing' script, with spritely strokes and merry whirls, called Nastaliq. It became the predominant style of Persian calligraphy during the 15th and 16th centuries, and was also adopted in the manuscripts and documents of the Mughal period.

The Mughals were great patrons of art and literature. The art of writing was a most honoured profession in the Mughal courts. At the time when Abul Fazal was writing the *Akbar Namah*, the Imperial Library at Fatehpur Sikri was divided into various sections, so that Hindu, Persian, Greek, Kashmiri and Arabic books were separately placed. 'Experienced people bring them daily and read them before his Majesty, who hears every book from the beginning to the end .....Among books of renown, there are few that are not read in His Majesty's assembly hall. ...' So remarks Abul Fazal. A number of Persian classics, including the *Shahnama*, Sadi's *Gulistan* and *Bustan*, and works by Jami, were among his favourites. He also ordered a great number of Indian books to be translated into Persian.

Of all these books, many were profusely illustrated by the Court painters. On most of the famous manuscripts numerous painters were engaged; one would do the drawing, another the painting, and in many instances a third would be responsible for the

*A manuscript copy of the Holy Quran richly illuminated with golden ink*

*An illustrated manuscript, Bahar-e-Danish, a collection of romantic stories by Enayetullah, 1070 A. H.*

heads of the figures, especially if they were individual portraits.

The literary tradition continued through the entire period and a private library was a sign of distinction among nobles and the enlightened. In the words of Sir Jadu Nath Sarkar, 'We owe to the Muhammadan influence the practice of diffusing knowledge by the copying and circulation of books, while the early Hindu writers, as a general rule, loved to make a secret of their production'.

The fragile nature of manuscripts and the ravages of time have left little of those literary treasures. In Lalbagh Fort Museum, a small collection of manuscripts has been put on display on the eastern side of the first room on the upper floor. The manuscripts consist of five copies of the holy Quran, transcribed by various calligraphers and a few other books produced in the late Mughal period.

Among the Quranic manuscripts, one notable work is that transcribed in Khat-e-Bahar with some portions at the end in Naskhi script. Another Quran manuscript with beautiful illumination is accompanied by *tafsir*, or explanatory notes. The Quranic text is written in Naskh, while the *tafsir* is written in Nastaliq, running in oblique lines around the margin. The name of the scribe appears at the end as Amiruddin Qaderi, who wrote the manuscript in 1277 A.H.

Among other manuscripts the noteworthy works are *Tarikh-i-Alamgiri*, a history of the first ten years of the reign of Aurangzeb Alamgir; *Sirr-i-Akbar* a translated version of some chapters of Upanishad

dealing with mysticism; *Fatwa-i-Burhani*, a treatise on jurisprudence by Maulana Nasiruddin Lahori, transcribed in 1090 A. H.; a beautiful copy of *Diwan-i-Hafiz*, transcribed by Faqir Muhammad Qasim in 1091 A.H.; a *masnavi* of *Amir Khusrau*, transcribed in 1019 A. H.; a *tafsir* of *Yusuf-o-Zuleikha*, by Mullah Hirati; *Majmal-al-Bahrain*, a treatise on mysticism by Prince Dara Shukoh.

## COINS

A large collection of Mughal coins is displayed in the first room on the upper storey of the Museum. It is to be noted that the Mughals adopted some reforms in the currency regulations introduced by Sher Shah. Mughal mints were situated in almost all the district headquarters of the period as may be seen in the map affixed to the wall in a niche. Both silver and gold coins of the period from the time of Babur to that of Mohammad Shah are on display. The display has been arranged in pairs of the obverse and reverse sides of each coin. On the walls above the showcases are enlarged replicas of a few coins of Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb.

A few dated coins are those of Babur (936 A. H.); Jahangir (1026 A. H. and 1032 A. H.); Shahjahan (1041 A. H.); Aurangzeb (1107 A. H and 1118 A. H.); Shah Alam (1122 A. H.); Jehandar Shah (1124 A. H.); Farrukh Syar (1129 A. H.); and Muhammad Shah (1133 A. H.). Most of the coins also show the name of the town at which they were struck.

*An enlarged replica of Babar's coin dated 936 A. H.*

## CERAMICS

Ceramic industry in Muslim countries developed early in the Abbasid period. The main stimulus was probably the arrival of Tang pottery from China in the marts of Baghdad where, shortly afterwards, ceramic ware was being manufactured on a mass scale. The Baghdad potters evolved a peculiar technique of applying metallic lustres to the ware and the art remained their exclusive secret for a long time. The industry gradually spread to Nishapur, Samarkand (Afrasiyab), Samarra, Cairo, Rayy, Damascus, Raqqa, Kashan, etc., where the art received patronage from the ruling dynasties in various periods. Each of these centres formed a separate school of ceramic art, excelling in one style or another. The industry flourished throughout the Muslim countries from 9th to 14th century A. D. Towards the mid-14th century, the Kashan school of ceramics gave rise to Sultanabad pottery which was in a sense the beginning of a decline in the art.

In the Indo-Pakistan sub-continent, although the tile industry flourished at such places as Thatta, Multan, Agra, etc. there is very little evidence to show that ceramic ware was produced on mass scale. Fancy pottery, perhaps, was one of the chief items of import from neighbouring Iran and China during the Mughal period.

In the Central Hall, on the upper floor of the Museum, there are a few representative specimens of porcelain ware used by well-to-do society during the Mughal period. These comprise ceramic plates with

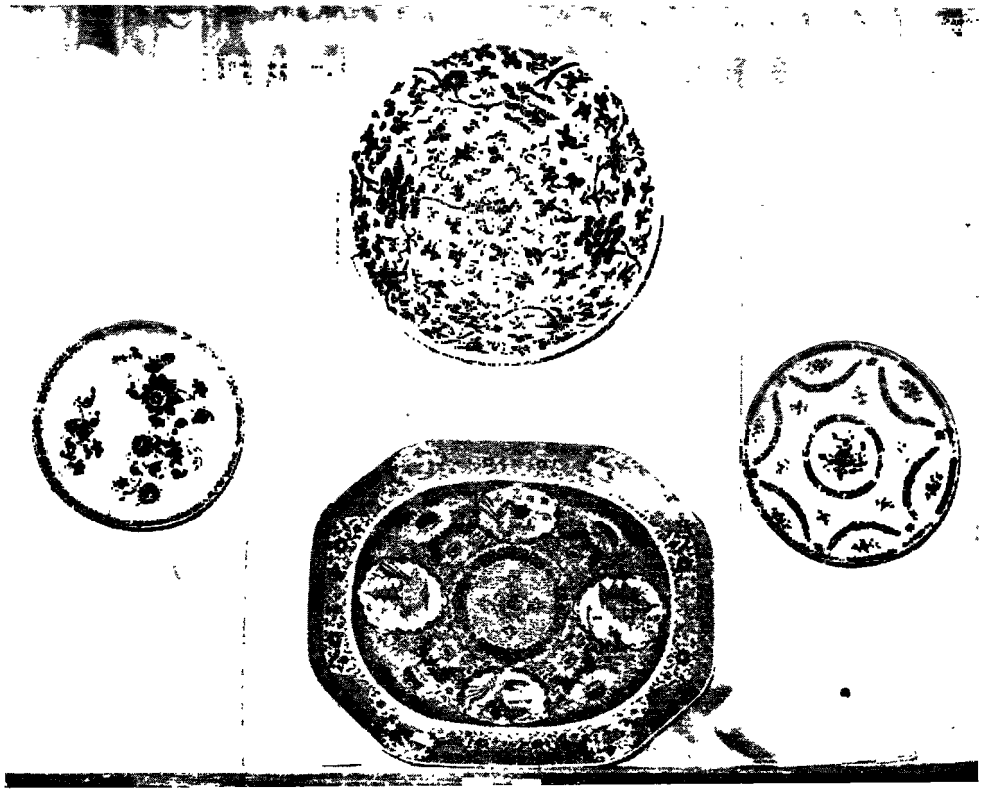
floral decorations, platters, round and oval jars, vases and celadon plates.

The Chinese jars and vases show deep turquoise, yellow and azure colours. A large oval jar, without rim, has a pictorial motif of a pagoda overlooking a lagoon surrounded by trees. A four-sided yellow vase has two handles made in the shape of dragons, with bunches of flower and gryphon mouths projecting in relief from the sides of the vase.

Some Persian porcelain plates and small round jars show arabesque flowery patterns. One of the plates carries a faded gold lustre on the flange and short festoons of multicoloured flowers in the basin. Two large celadon platters with glass lustre are displayed toward the northern end of the Hall. Celadon ware was adopted in Persia from Chinese potters during the Il-khanid period and the pieces displayed here date from the late Mughal period.

## CARPETS

Carpets have a long history of evolution from the coarse woollen mats used in shepherd-tents of Central Asia to those splendid pieces found in Imperial palaces. Under royal patronage the carpet weaving industry developed in all wool-producing areas of the Muslim World, particularly in Syria, Turkey and Iran. Progress in carpet-making was a combined result of improved broad looms, and refinement in wool dyeing, yarn mixing, knotting and felting techniques. The thickly woven matrice beneath the soft wool was gradually made to endure longer by introducing a certain proportion of flax or silk fibres in the cotton.



*Porcelain wares, late-Mughal period Platter at the bottom bears Chinese motif of pagoda and water*

*Porcelain vases from China, post-Ming period*

*A Mughal carpet in the Museum, Lalbagh Fort*

Carpets made an essential item of domestic comfort for the rich during the Mughal period. Indigenous carpets of excellent quality were prepared in the sheep rearing areas of Kashmir and north western tribal districts. Most of the carpets of that time show a high degree of refinement in designing and colour blending, characteristic of Persian carpets.

Beneath the arches in the Central Hall, three small size specimens of Mughal carpets are displayed. One of these carpets carries a wide border dispersed with floral decorations in regular arrangement, and a repeated hemistich in Persian, set in geometrical enclosures. After a narrow border inside, there is a lively scene of riders hunting ferocious animals in a forest. The pictures have been woven with a masterly vividness, surpassed perhaps only by some of the miniatures of the Mughal period.

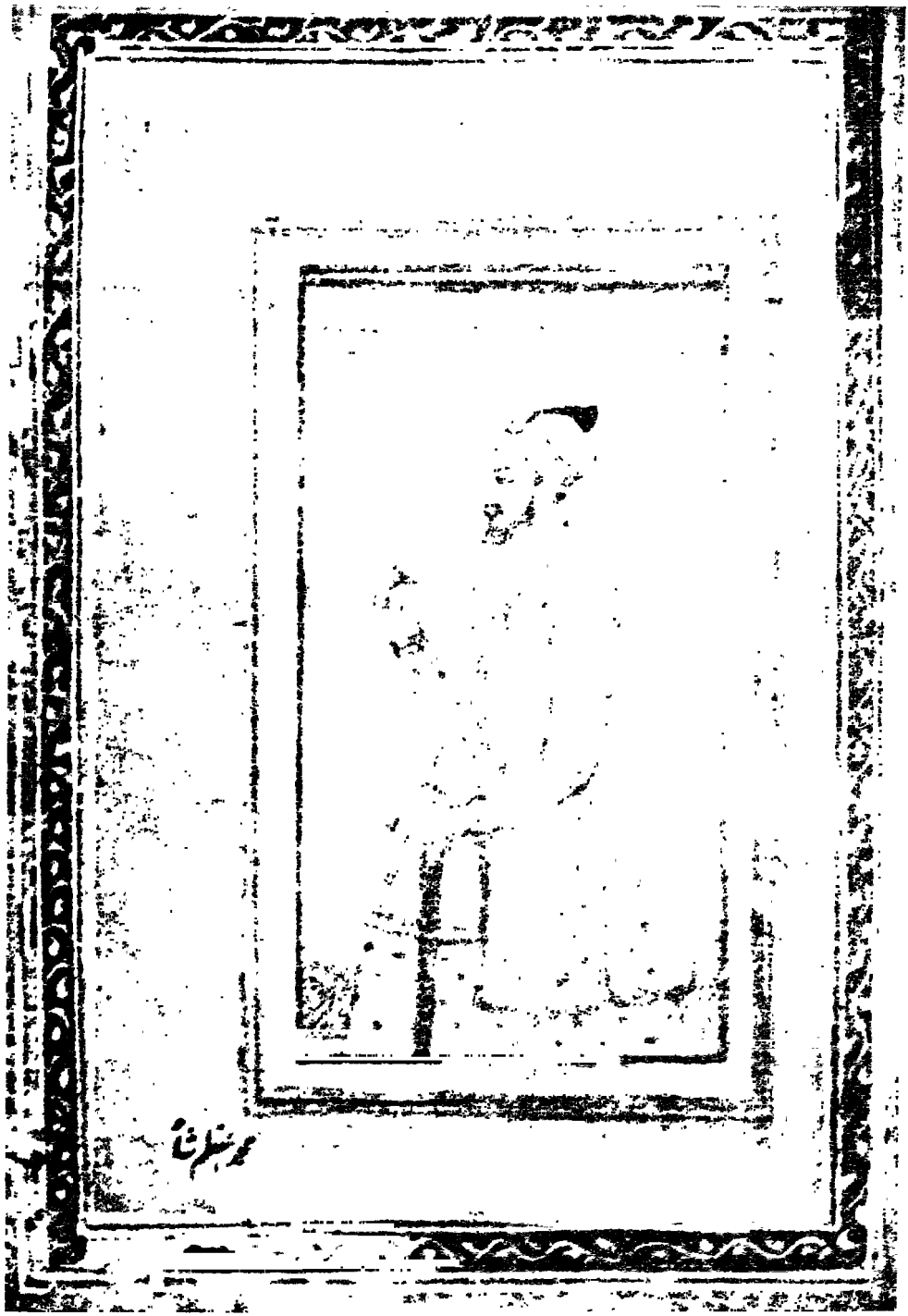
## PAINTINGS

In spite of the injunctions of Islam against making pictures of living beings, the art of painting flourished in Persian courts. In the Safavid and Il-khanid periods, Persian painting reached an extremely high standard. Emperor Humayun, who had a great love for everything Persian, brought two painters to India, Abd al-Samad and Mir Sayyid Ali of the Court of Shah Tahmasp. During the reign of Akbar (1556-1605 A. D.) these painters trained a number of Indian disciples among whom Daswanth and Basawan attained mastery in the craft. The Persian delicacy of details and linear grace combined with the Indian love for deep colours in varied shades of green, red, orange, blue and mauve gave rise to a peculiar style of painting known as the Mughal school. Later, the arrival

of European painters at the Mughal Court added the technique of representing perspective which imparted a sense of three dimensions and depth to the canvas.

Akbar employed a large number of painters to prepare miniatures for the manuscripts of *Hamza Nama, Razm Nama, Shah Nama,* etc. Much of their finest work was produced in the shape of isolated miniature portraits for albums. Some of these projects continued through the reign of Jahangir and the court painters enjoyed an honourable position up to the time of Shahjahan. The orthodox puritanism of Aurangzeb however dispensed with the court painters. The decadance of the Mughal Empire saw a dispersal of painters among the courts of Rajas and Nawabs. This gave rise to a number of schools of paintings in the sub-continent established in such places as Basholi and Kangra in the Punjab hills, Rajputana, Deccan, etc.

In the Central Hall, on the upper floor, a small collection of Mughal miniatures and vignette paintings of the late period has been displayed in showcases beneath the arches on the western side. Notable among these show Hafiz Shirazi meditating beneath a tree with a background of rolling hillocks and houses in the distance; a scene depicting a black bull trampling two persons with its hoofs, a group of nobles watching the scene; a vignette showing the dance of camels; and a picture of wild animals frolicking together in a tangle of tendrils, twigs, leaves and flowers. There are also some court scenes and portraits of Prince Azam Shah, Asaf Jah Bahadur, and a young princess named Durdana.




*A portrait of Muhammad Azam Shah*

*A miniature painting, 'Madhomawati'*

## SPECIMENS OF CALLIGRAPHY

Displayed in the northern room on first floor are a few tughras and specimens of calligraphy in show-cases on the right hand side of the passages. These were meant for wall decorations in the houses of noble-men and as an indirect means of education for the young. The tughras, carrying Quranic verses and quotations from the Hadith, were written in flourishing Naskh and elaborate Nastaliq characters with floral decorations, and enclosed within linear borders filled with gold, blue and a number of other pleasing colours, Some of these tughras and specimens of calligraphy bear signatures of the calligrapher, and the year in which they were prepared.

A notable example of tughra, bearing a verse of the holy Quran in naskh, is signed Muhammad Hussain in the year 1284 A. H. A specimen of calligraphy showing Naskh, Nastaliq, Shikasta, and Thuluth script was done by Muhammad Saleh in the 1254 A. H. A quatrain in Persian written in Nastaliq is the work of Muhammad Rahim. A couplet in praise of the Prophet written in Persian and another in Urdu are written in Nastaliq by calligraphers Fateh Ali (1208 A. H.) and Syed Rahmat Ali (1301 A. H.) respectively.

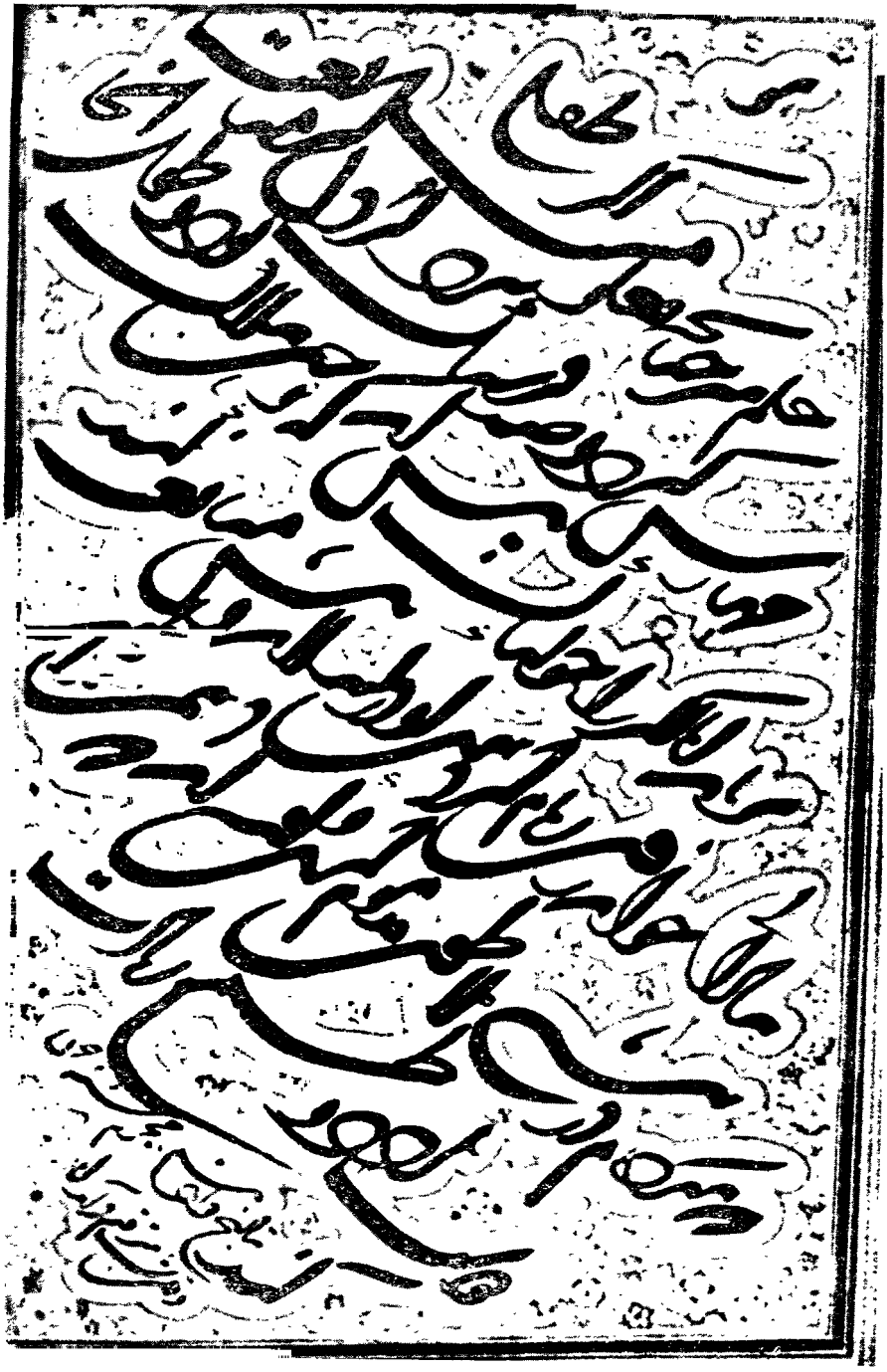
## FARMANS

Farmans, or royal decrees, form an important part of the historical documents which are valuable records for research and study. The farmans in the Mughal period were issued by the courts in the Persian language. The numbers of seal impressions and signatures and a distinctive legal language used in these

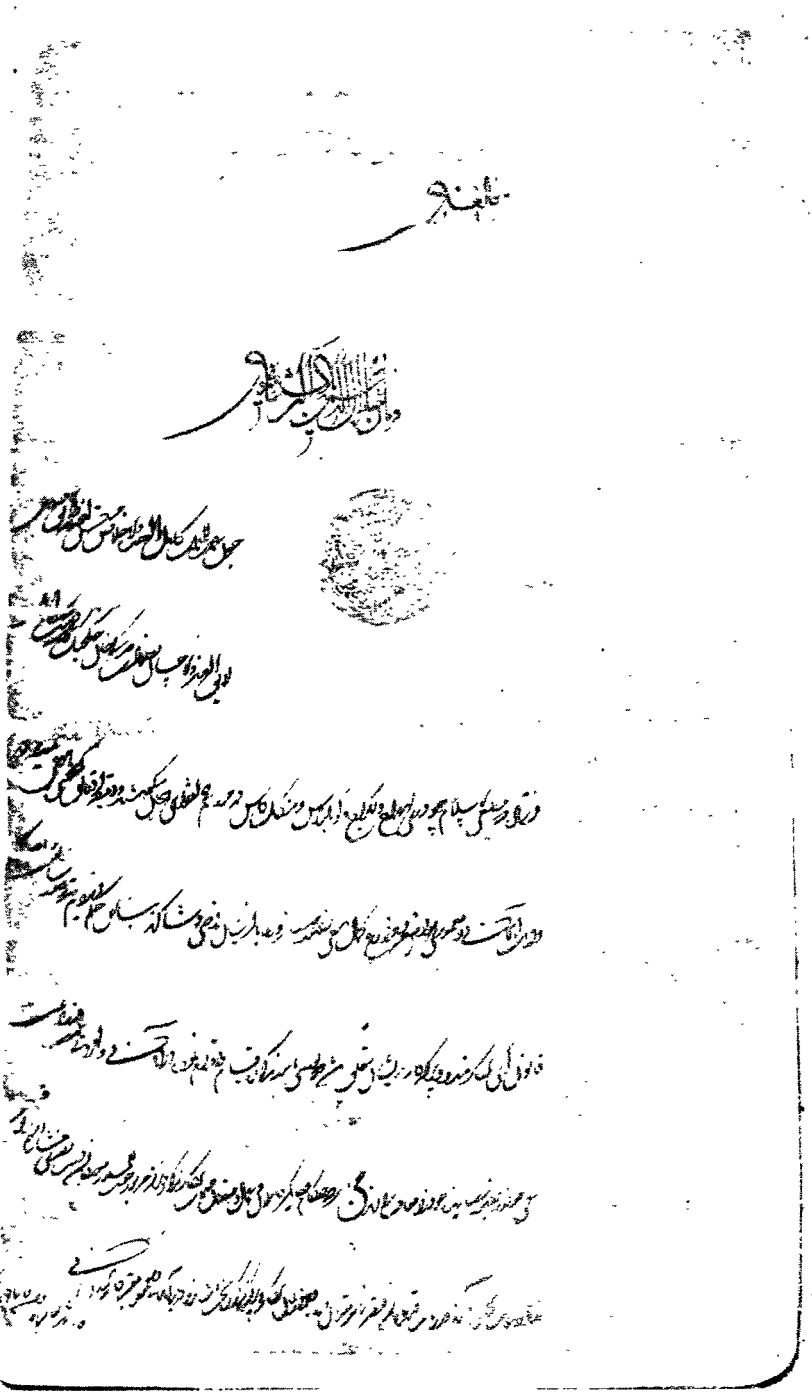
records evidence a well-regulated administration divided into departments with various responsibilities.

The Museum displays a number of farmans, property deeds and *nikahnamas* issued at various dates of the ruling Emperors of Mughal dynasty. Notable among these documents are two farmans issued by Akbar in the years 955 A. H. and 976 A. H.; a parwana of Shah Alam issued in 1181 A. H.; and a large farman of the same Emperor, issued in his second regnal year.

Plate XIV



*A Specimen of calligraphy: Tughra in bold shikastah style*



A farman of emperor Akbar dated 955 A. H.

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